

1. **Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.**

**Description of Practice Proposed for Recognition:** **Directing a Play I** is an innovative half-year course, which gives advanced third- or fourth-year theatre students the opportunity to direct the first-year Theatre Arts students in their one-act plays, which are presented for the public. **Directing a Play II** is the same as Directing a Play I except that if the student directed a comedy play in the first course, he or she must direct a serious drama, or vice versa, giving him/her the opportunity to experience both major styles.

During the second semester, each Theatre Arts class is divided into three or four groups to rehearse and perform one-act plays for the public. The Directing a Play student participates in all aspects of directing a play, including play selection, written script analysis, auditions, the rehearsal process, technical requirements, and management of an evening public performance. The theatre teacher circulates among the groups each day checking and critiquing progress. After the performance, the Directing a Play student writes a reflective critique of the experience and of his/her directing abilities.

**The Main Objectives** of these two new courses, **Directing a Play I** and **Directing a Play II** are

- (1) To increase the performance and leadership skills of the advanced theatre students
- (2) To provide more direct feedback between a first-year Theatre Arts one-act play cast and its director

This course developed slowly over four years through a desire on the part of the advanced theatre students to creatively direct and through a need of the teacher to improve the rehearsal period for the Theatre Arts one-act play unit. It became clear that instead of directing each of the three plays in a class herself, the teacher could better oversee the process by assigning to each play an advanced student, who could then increase his or her own skills. At first the advanced theatre students used a study hall period to come into the class and direct a play. Then **in the spring of 1999 the course was offered for credit. This allowed the teacher to better monitor the directors and hold them accountable for each step in the process.**

**This Practice Is Innovative:** no other known high school has such a course, in which advanced students are able to direct and coach first-year students in their performances. The student directors must demonstrate responsibility and excellent interpersonal skills to have a successful production.

**This Practice Promotes High Student Achievement:**

- (1) Because **it is a graded course instead of an extra-curricular theatre experience**, the student directors have the incentive of a grade added to the usual incentive of public success.
- (2) The first-year theatre arts students have a director constantly working with them, rather than a teacher-director circulating among a few different groups.
- (3) The public performance in May further generates high student achievement. Both the director and cast members of each play wish to produce something they can be proud of.

2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

The following **Core Curriculum Content Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts** are addressed by the Directing a Play courses:

**CCCS 1.1:** “All students will acquire knowledge and skills that increase aesthetic awareness in dance, music, theater, and visual arts.”

During the planning stages of the course, Directing a Play, student directors consider how all elements of their production (plot line and theme, acting style, set design and decoration, costume and makeup design) will impact the aesthetic experience of the audience. Each director considers: “How do I want my audience to feel during my show?” “What message should they walk away with?”

**CCCS 1.2:** “All students will refine perceptual, intellectual, physical, and technical skills through creating dance, music, theater, and/or visual arts.”

This is the standard most strongly addressed by this practice because through all of the steps of production (preplanning, audition, rehearsal, performance), each student director creates a work of art that is presented before an evening audience.

**CCCS 1.3:** “All students will utilize arts elements and arts media to produce artistic products and performances.”

Each student director utilizes that element/media distinctive to play production: the script. Each student director chooses an appropriate script for production and during the preplanning stage analyzes the play for theme, style, mood, form, language, structure, and characterization.

**CCCS 1.4:** “All students will demonstrate knowledge of the process of critique.”

Each student director continues to critique his cast and his own work throughout the process from auditions, through rehearsals, to the self-evaluation essay after the performance.

**CCCS 1.6:** “All students will develop design skills for planning the form and function of space, structures, objects, sound, and events.”

Each student director engages in the following areas to plan the form and function of the play: set design, costume and makeup design, sound effects and music, rehearsal schedule, and the blocking of actor movement.

The following **Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** are addressed by the Directing a Play courses:

**WPRS 1.1:** “All students will demonstrate employability skills and work habits, such as work ethic, dependability, promptness, and getting along with others, needed to get and keep a job.”

Each student director is expected to keep to timelines. The teacher must be able to depend on each student director to continue rehearsal while she is supervising other groups. Each student director is expected to lead, coach, and direct without becoming dictatorial. (Before the plays are cast the directing students are given instruction in being directors that allow their cast members to share the creative vision and that demonstrate trust and patience.)

**WPRS 3:** “All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.”

These skills are used continually throughout the directing process outlined in the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* above. The specific Cumulative Progress Indicators of WPRS 3 most addressed are numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

**WPRS 4:** “All students will demonstrate self-management skills.”

Because the student directors are leading a younger group of actors, most of the skills indicated by Standard 4 are also demonstrated. Each student director is expected to stay on task during the rehearsal process, even when the teacher is working with another cast group across the room. The specific Cumulative Progress Indicators of WPRS 4 most addressed are numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11.

**WPRS 5:** “All students will apply safety principles.”

During the rehearsal, set painting, and performance phases of the one-act play unit, the directing student must make sure they and the actors observe the safety rules of the stage to prevent accidents.

**3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.**

The Directing a Play courses are very successful vehicles for meeting the educational needs of the students addressed. The two main objectives mentioned in #1 **describe these educational needs: The first objective of the practice is to increase the performance and leadership skills of the advanced theatre students.** The directing students spend six weeks studying directing skills, choosing and analyzing an appropriate script, designing their sets, and preparing preliminary blocking before they begin rehearsals. They work very hard to be completely prepared before they must lead other students because they naturally wish to appear knowledgeable and in control to their young cast. Then the level of responsibility required of these students creates a controlled, but creative environment for the rehearsal process.

**The second objective of the practice is to provide more direct feedback between a first-year Theatre Arts one-act play cast and its director.** These past seven years have shown that the younger students respond positively to the direction of the advanced students and a strong bond is developed between director and cast members. The theatre students work hard for their director because all wish to have a good performance for the public. Only occasionally has the teacher had to step in to settle a minor personality dispute. (Often the advanced directing students become mentors to the younger theatre students, extending these relationships beyond their high school years. The students often speak of getting e-mail from a former director who is in college or speak of a director who has come to see them in their current play.)

**Assessment Measures:**

- (1) The students take a **written test** on directing skills.
- (2) The teacher uses **rubrics** to conduct formal assessments throughout the play process. The following rubrics are used for Directing a Play students:
  - Script Selection
  - Auditioning Techniques
  - Movement Blocking
  - Rehearsal Direction
- (3) During the public performance a **panel of adults** who are experienced in play production **judge the performances** using **rubrics**. The directors are judged for movement blocking, ensemble work, and internal rhythm. The judging of the performances helps to further motivate the directors and their cast to create a good piece of theatre

**Data Showing Success:**

- (1) Since the practice officially became a course in 1999, twenty-four students have successfully completed one or both courses.
- (2) The school and community response to the *Evening of One-Act Plays* in May has been overwhelming. The popularity of this annual event has been one of the reasons the high school theatre arts program has grown from one basic class in 1992 to five full classes, including three full-year and two half-year courses, today.
- (3) Occasionally some of the best plays are presented in an area drama festival. A few of the past directors have won awards for **Best Student Director**.

**4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.**

Any high school with at least a two-year theatre arts program could easily replicate this practice. The teacher of the course in this district would be happy to send the complete course guide, including handouts, test, and rubrics, to any interested district. She would also be happy to visit any district to assist them in beginning the program.

(Note: Any interested district should stock a large number of appropriate one-act play scripts to allow for a large selection of plays that fit the number and gender of students in any particular class. Then the district should budget the cost of actor scripts and royalties for public performance.)